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# Volunteerism

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Once they have reached retirement, many people feel employment doors are closed to them. But one door that does open is the opportunity for community involvement through volunteerism.

Volunteers don't have to be professionals. An interest in helping others is the only basic requirement. Most organizations will give you an initial training period, depending on the type of job you choose.

As a volunteer, you can work as little or as much as you choose. The time you have available will determine the range of volunteer jobs open to you.

Elderly People and Shut-ins often need the kind of neighbourly help a volunteer can give. You may be asked to help with shopping, mailing letters, taking someone to the clinic, or just providing an afternoon of conversation. Homes for the Aged, Nursing Homes and Senior Citizens' Centres usually need volunteers to help those who are unable to function on their own.





Helping others to learn can be a challenging undertaking. There are many volunteer teaching opportunities including tutoring children in academic subjects, helping adults to up-grade their education, or teaching English to new Canadians. Some schools use volunteers to assist teachers in the classroom. Others need volunteers to assist in after-school activities. In areas where there doesn't seem to be any organized program of volunteerism in the schools, enquiries to the teachers themselves will no doubt come up with children who have learning problems that require special attention. Where a parent or teacher is unable to spend this extra time with the child, the volunteer could provide an invaluable substitute.

Working with children or young people can be one of the most rewarding types of volunteer activity. Opportunities exist in church groups, organizations like the boy scouts and girl guides, YWCA/YMCA or local amateur sports organizations. Day nurseries, especially those run by municipalities or associations for the handicapped generally have an urgent need for volunteers.







In programs for the mentally and physically handicapped, you can work with an individual or with a group, in recreation, rehabilitation, teaching or simply by providing transportation. Many handicapped people are forced to move to institutions because there is no one to help them with simple everyday tasks. Opportunities to help the handicapped can be found by contacting local associations for the handicapped, hospitals, or schools.

Charitable organizations rely almost solely on volunteers in the collection of funds and operation of services.

Hospitals provide many opportunities for volunteers, assisting in clinics with physical and occupational therapy, organizing and supervising play activity for children, selling in a gift shop, or generally assisting nursing staff in providing individual attention to patients.

Information Services Centres are now being established in many urban areas. These centres are designed to make it easier for people to get the kinds of services and programs they need. As a volunteer you may be needed right in the Centre to answer the telephone requests, help with clerical work or assist in a variety of duties. If you are not needed at the Centre, they will be able to direct you to the agency or facility where you are most needed.





In Metro Toronto, The Volunteer Centre of Metro Toronto, acts as a clearing house for people interested in volunteer work. They are located at 344 Bloor Street West, Suite 207, Telephone 961-6888.

In other areas of Ontario where this type of service does not exist, interested people should contact the agency or organization directly.

In rural areas, it may be necessary to initiate you own program of volunteerism.

The need for volunteers is always there whether in an organized or unorganized community.

If you would like to become involved in volunteer work but are not sure who to approach in your community there are a few obvious places to start. Local ministers or priests, police, doctors, teachers, and municipal officials should be able to direct you to individuals or organizations in need of your help.

The Senior Volunteer in Service Program of the Ministry of Community and Social Services has a special place for retired people.

As a Ministry volunteer, you would act as an information source for the elderly in your community, assisting those in need to benefit from Ministry programs and services.







If you live in a municipality of 25,000 people or less and would like to become a Senior Volunteer in Service, contact the Director of your local regional office of the Ministry. (A list of Regional Offices is included in the General Resources lists in the kit.)





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